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Yukon will ask its citizens if they want to ditch first past the post in future elections

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The Yukon Legislative Building is seen in Whitehorse, on Wednesday, July 23, 2025. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Darryl Dyck

Yukon is gearing up for a territorial election later this year and this time around, the voting system itself is on the ballot.

This year's election will feature a plebiscite on whether the territory should continue to elect leaders through first-past-the-post (FPTP), the system currently in use across Canada, or to adopt a different set of rules.

"This non-binding vote does not result in an immediate change but helps to gauge what Yukoners think about potentially changing the voting system," reads a release from the territory published Thursday. "The Government of Yukon will continue to remain neutral during this process."

The move comes following a yearslong committee review of the territory's voting system. In its final report last fall, the [Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform](#) recommended replacing FPTP with a ranked vote system, or alternative vote (AV), wherein voters choose multiple candidates in order of who they would most prefer to win, and those second, third and other choices are factored in.

Under the current FPTP system, the candidate in each race with the largest number of votes wins, regardless of whether they secure a majority.

Meanwhile, in a ranked-voting election, if no candidate wins a majority, then the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated from the running and their votes are redistributed based on who each voter chose as their second choice. This process repeats until a candidate passes the majority threshold, and a winner is declared.

Voting on voting

FPTP remains in use for the vast majority of Canadian elections, but ranked-ballot systems do commonly appear in leadership races for political parties, and occasionally in municipal votes.

In 2018, the City of London, Ont., held a [mayoral race by ranked-choice vote](#), but two years later, the province outlawed ranked ballots in future municipal elections.

Commissions, plebiscites and referenda on [electoral reform](#) have been explored provincially in British Columbia and Prince Edward Island, and recommended federally by a variety of political parties and advocates.

The Yukon report notes that some feel their votes are “wasted” under FPTP, contributing to a sense of apathy among voters, and that better elections would prioritize sincerity in voting, interparty collaboration and confidence in the democratic system.

“As a Citizens’ Assembly, we feel that the current system of voting does not reflect these values as well as it should,” it reads, noting that in a 2022 survey, only about three in 10 Yukoners agreed that FPTP adequately reflected their intentions.

A common criticism of FPTP is vote-splitting, a phenomenon where if two parties are running with similar platforms, a large proportion of voters with closely aligned values may be split between them, hurting the chance that either party will win, and in turn that those voters’ values will be represented in the outcome.

As a result, voters may engage in strategic voting, or choosing the party that isn’t the most closely aligned to their politics, but that they feel has a better chance of winning. Critics say this behaviour discourages smaller parties and independent candidates, hurting diversity and deepening political polarization.

Arguments for maintaining FPTP, meanwhile, include that it prioritizes regional representation for smaller jurisdictions and provides a straightforward, clear-cut result, explainable in a sentence.

FPTP elections can also encourage parties to broaden their appeal, fostering campaigns that focus on common ground and discourage political extremism, notes the [Electoral Knowledge Network](#).

But preferences on electoral systems can vary beyond those on the ballot this year. Some advocates favour elections that assign parties seats based on the popular vote, rather than winning individual geographical districts, and others argue that those districts can have more than one winning candidate.

Fair Vote Canada, an organization advocating a proportional representation system, wrote in a statement last fall that it “cannot support the Citizens’ Assembly’s recommendation for Alternative Vote,” as the proposal would not adequately reflect the popular vote in a future election.

“We wish the people of the Yukon Territory all the best as they move forward,” the statement concludes.

Perhaps most prominently in recent years, former prime minister Justin Trudeau promised ahead of 2015’s federal election that it would be the last to use FPTP.

“In a multi-party democracy like Canada’s, FPTP distorts the will of the electorate,” reads a [federal FAQ published in 2016](#). “It is part of the reason that many Canadians don’t engage in or care about politics.”

Trudeau later walked back that plan, writing in a [2017 mandate letter](#) that following cross-country consultations, “a clear preference for a new electoral system, let alone a consensus, has not emerged.”

“Without a clear preference or a clear question, a referendum would not be in Canada’s interest,” he wrote.

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